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**STRATEGIC SEALIFT FUNDING POLICY:
WILL IT KEEP OUR
DEFENSE POLICY AFLOAT?**

BY

**LIEUTENANT COLONEL HAROLD L. HAGANS, JR.
United States Army**

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The fall of communism throughout most of the world, and particularly the collapse of the Soviet Union, marked the end of the cold war. These dramatic events have given rise to a new National Military Strategy. This new strategy has a regional focus and has as key components the concepts of "Forward Presence" and "Power Projection." With the United States defense establishment retrenching due to a reduced global threat environment and austere fiscal resources, we will have far less forces stationed overseas with a greater need to reinforce those forces with strategic mobility assets. To meet the objectives of the new strategy, we must now place a greater reliance on the strategic mobility triad consisting of airlift, sealift and prepositioning.

There have been some progress made in strengthening our mobility posture. The C-17 Airlifter program is ongoing. Prepositioning programs, both afloat and land-based, continues. Our most significant shortfall is in sealift capacity. The decline of the US Merchant Marine and shipbuilding industry are indicators. The Persian Gulf War vividly highlighted the vulnerabilities of our sealift program and set into motion a new funding policy that promises significant improvements.

As the Service with the preponderance of people and equipment to move in a crisis, the Army has the most at stake as we struggle to balance budgets and try to get the most out limited mobility asset funds. Traditionally, the Navy has been the manager of sealift dollars for the Department of Defense. Yet in the past, the Congress has appropriated funds for sealift and, for various reasons, few ships were acquired. The newly established National Defense Sealift Fund proposes to resolve the dilemma.

This study examines the elements of the strategic mobility triad funding programs. The primary focus, however, is on the history and future of the sealift funding. It will attempt to determine whether adequate funding has been programmed, whether the proper management structure is in place, and the roles of each of the Federal Agencies with an interest in the sealift program. Finally, the study will draw conclusions as to the future of the United States strategic sealift capability.

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USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER

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STRATEGIC SEALIFT FUNDING POLICY:
WILL IT KEEP OUR DEFENSE POLICY AFLOAT?

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

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Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania 17013

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INTRODUCTION

"...our ability to defend our interest will depend on our speed and our agility. And we will need forces that give us a global reach. No amount of political change will alter the geographic fact that we are separated from many of our most important allies and interest by thousands of miles of water. And in many of the conflicts we could face, we may not have the luxury of matching manpower with prepositioned material. We'll have to have air and sea-lift capacities to get our forces where they are needed, when they are needed."

President George Bush
The Aspen Institute
2 August 1990

A NEW STRATEGY

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff states that:

"Regional focus, flexible/adaptive planning, and reduced forward presence have all combined to significantly increase our reliance on strategic mobility."¹ The national military strategy published in January 1992, is a radical departure from previous defense policy formed in the midst of a cold war with communist regimes around the globe. This departure was caused by the virtual elimination of communist governments worldwide and the shift from a policy based on a global threat to a regional conflict based policy. Our new military strategy is derived from broad national interests and objectives that, in essence, ensures the survival of the United States, its democratic institutions, and seeks a secure, healthy, and prosperous world.

The new strategy as postulated above requires a balanced U.S. capability of strategic mobility assets sufficient to

project a global force in response to threats to our vital national interest. A carryover from previous defense policy of "forward presence" is our reliance on the triad of strategic mobility elements called sealift, airlift, and prepositioning. With the U.S. defense establishment retrenching due to a reduced threat environment and austere budgets, we will have less forces stationed overseas with a greater need to reinforce those forces with mobility assets.

Coupled with the strategic concept of "forward presence", our new strategy places heavy emphasis on providing the capability to respond to regional crisis. A key element of the national military strategy, the "crisis response" concept, in regions where we do not have a forward presence, is best accomplished from the sea and, as such, will depend on strategic sealift. The changing role of the United States, as a new world order takes hold, places a renewed sense of urgency on our strategic agility. In his annual report, former Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney states: "Whether our Nation is called on to defend its security interest or to assist humanitarian or peacekeeping efforts, the ability to deploy forces quickly and in adequate strength is critical to America's leadership role in the post-Cold War world."²

To further emphasize the importance of strategic mobility in meeting our defense goals, the Commander-in-Chief states that "Our strategy demands we be able to move men and materiel to the scene of a crisis at a pace and in numbers sufficient to field an

overwhelming force."³ It is the role of the military to support and protect national interests, and, to do so, military deployment capability must be increased through expanded investment in sealift, prepositioning and transportation infrastructure in the United States and sustained investment in airlift.

Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm emphatically proved the importance of this strategy. Moreover, this deployment to distant shores added credence to the U.S. military's long standing reliance on a strategic mobility triad--airlift, sealift and prepositioning. Did it work for Desert Shield and Desert Storm? Yes, but only because we had ample time to react and move men and equipment over great distances to meet the threat. Future conflicts, however, may not provide the luxury of an extended reaction time. In which case, only a substantial increase in strategic mobility assets will assure force closure. Again, President Bush, "...we must sustain and expand our investment in airlift, sealift and--where possible--prepositioning."⁴

Current plans and programs on the drawing board or underway will expand only a part of our mobility force. As such, a significant shortfall in lift capability will still exist after these programs are completed. The C-17 airlifter is in production and funding appropriated for additional sealift and prepositioning ships. While these programs will add significantly to our capability, they will not resolve the

shortfalls that exist in meeting total lift requirements.

Further aggravating the immediate problem is the fact that these new assets will not all be available until 1998 and beyond.⁵

This treatise examines the sealift portion of the triad in view of our national strategy and in particular, the funding policy and implementation plans that will allow us to achieve the objectives set forth in our national security strategy.

THE DECLINE OF THE U.S. MERCHANT MARINE

"It is necessary for the national defense and development of its foreign and domestic commerce that the United States shall have a merchant marine...capable of serving as a naval and military auxiliary in time of war or national emergency."

Merchant Marine Act of 1936.

The importance of a viable sealift fleet was never so much brought to the forefront than during Operation Desert Shield. That singular event confirmed what every study of a regional conflict in Southwest Asia had concluded, that the United States had insufficient sealift to deliver the required weapons, supporting equipment, and ammunition in an acceptable time frame. This deficiency, however, did not occur overnight. In fact, military leaders of all Services, the Congress, and industry officials have recognized the shortfall for many years. Several factors contribute to the problem.

The constantly declining American merchant marine was a major factor in the problem. What is even more disturbing is

that, without major policy changes, our merchant marine posture has a very dim future. In an interview with editors of Sea Power Magazine, Christopher L. Koch, Chairman of the Federal Maritime Commission, provided some appalling statistics:

"...at the end of World War II the United States controlled about 60 percent of the world's shipping tonnage, and that between 1942 and 1945 we produced some 5,000 vessels in some of the most modern shipyards in the world. But by 1970 the liner fleet consisted of 430 vessels, and today there are about 120. In 1960 our liner fleet supported 100,000 seafarers, but only 27,000 in 1990. And of the 2,500 ships on the world order book for 1992, only one was built in the United States."⁶

Statistics such as these have been discussed for a number of years without any substantive action on the part those responsible for maritime policy which is a key issue to be addressed herein. Additionally, past legislative attempts have, for the most part, been unsuccessful due to special interest group differences. What is needed is a comprehensive policy that addresses all national interests: defense, commerce, and the industrial base. Again Commissioner Koch: "...the rationale for a merchant marine is not just national security and defense.... There is a second rationale for a merchant marine, which is the commercial, economic, and trading interest of this nation."⁷ To further illustrate his point for a strong merchant marine, Koch quotes a past president of France's major shipping line: "Tomorrow's dominant countries could well be...those who control their production, navigation, commerce, and finance. It is noteworthy that the active Asian countries focused on exports

have armed themselves with at least two other major weapons of domination: control of a fleet, financial services, and above all, commercial power."⁸ The new administration, the Congress, and the nation would be well served to consider those thoughts.

The decline of the U.S. merchant marine fleet and of the U.S. shipbuilding industry in the decade prior to Desert Shield has generated mounting concern for America's maritime posture. This concern led to the creation of the Commission on Merchant Marine and Defense in 1986. Appointed by the President, the commission was directed to examine the status of the maritime and shipbuilding industries and to evaluate their operation to the year 2000. The following excerpt from the commission's many findings succinctly brings to the forefront the inadequacies of our maritime resources to meet the nation's military requirements: "There is today insufficient strategic sealift, both ships and trained personnel, for the United States, using only its resources as required by defense planning assumptions, to execute a major deployment in a single distant theater such as Southwest Asia. Without decisive action the situation will worsen substantially by the year 2000."⁹ This sobering finding was vividly demonstrated by Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, which generated the largest and most concentrated military sealift operation since World War II.

THE MOBILITY TRIAD

To meet uncertain future requirements and maintain the

ability to respond to a variety of circumstances, it is important that the triad be balanced. Many factors must be considered if the appropriate balance is to be achieved. While cost is certainly a major factor, other characteristics of strategic mobility assets play a role in the decision process. Table 1, below, depicts some of the advantages and disadvantages of different means of projecting combat power.

Table 1.

The Mobility Triad

CHARACTERISTICS

	SPEED	FLEXIBILITY	COST	VULNERABILITY	OTHER
AIRLIFT	FAST	FLEXIBLE	EXPENSIVE	MODERATE VULNERABILITY	LIMITED CAPACITY AIRFIELD DEPENDENT
SEALIFT	SLOW	MODERATE FLEXIBILITY	RELATIVELY INEXPENSIVE	MODERATE VULNERABILITY	LARGE CAPACITY SEAPORT/SEA-LANE DEPENDENT
PREPO-SITIONING	IN THEATER BUT NEEDS LIFT	LESS FLEXIBLE	MODERATE EXPENSE	VULNERABLE	REQUIRES MARRY UP/ REPOSITIONING DUPLICATE SETS REQUIRED

The cornerstone of the airlift portion of the triad will be the C-17 airlifter. This aircraft incorporates the best features of older airplanes with updated technology to provide airlift for a wide range of mission requirements. The C-17 will provide

vital speed and flexibility needed to support the Air Forces' global reach mission.

The C-17 combines the advantages of strategic airlifters like the C-5--range, speed, aerial refueling, and payload--with those of a tactical airlifter like the C-130--survivability, short airfield capability, maneuverability, and airdrop capability. With an ever increasing U.S. role in providing humanitarian relief and other power projection missions into underdeveloped areas to support national interest, the C-17 will assure global reach and timely response.

Prepositioning, either land-based or afloat, has one primary advantage; speed in getting supplies and equipment to the fight. In the worst possible scenarios, prepositioning can save as much as two weeks transportation time to deploy a major armored force. This advantage is offset, however, by several other factors that characterize prepo stocks. One, flexibility of the type of forces deployed and employment locations. Commanders will be limited to the type of force whose equipment is prepositioned and the location in which it is prepositioned. Two, prepositioned stocks are vulnerable to enemy interdiction or denial of use. Three, duplicate sets must be maintained at a significant cost and requires airlift to marry up with using units.

Sealift, while slow and moderately flexible because it is seaport dependent, has a large capacity and is relatively inexpensive in comparison with the other two legs of the triad. Ideally, sealift to meet defense needs should be available at a

much lower cost than we now pay to operate government owned vessels. This ideal situation would only exist if the U. S. merchant marine were a thriving, viable industrial asset that many in government and the private sector strongly advocate.

Often overlooked in determining mobility asset requirements are the reception capabilities in overseas theaters of operations. Critically important is the ability to off-load heavy equipment from strategic sealift vessels. The nature of war and conflict suggests that we may not have the luxury of choosing our next enemy or the place(s) we will fight. Fixed port facilities in many areas of the world are not adequate to off-load oceangoing vessels in the time frame required and in the quantities we intend to ship. In other instances, port facilities may be denied, damaged, or otherwise unavailable. History has shown that 90-95 percent of military equipment and supplies must be shipped by sea because of size and weight restrictions and the vast quantities required. As such, the use of air to overcome unavailable or inadequate fixed port facilities is not a feasible alternative. Can we get seaborne cargo ashore? What are the alternatives and what are the risks associated with them?

With the proliferation of containerization and the subsequent decline of breakbulk and other self-sustaining vessels (ships with onboard ship discharge systems), military logisticians are confronted with the problem of off-loading ocean cargo in austere or inadequate ports without the use of shipboard

or shore cranes. To overcome this deficiency, a number of specially designed vessel discharge systems, landing craft, lighters, and associated watercraft were purchased and fielded to perform this unique mission.

Because fixed ports and piers may not be available, most of these systems are designed either to augment a limited capacity port or to facilitate the discharge of a vessel while at anchor offshore. The later method is Logistics-Over-the-Shore or LOTS. Navy and Marine Corps operations of this type are Assault Follow-on Echelon or AFOE operations.

THE SEALIFT IMPERATIVE

"If there is one thing I would like to have had more of last Summer and early fall, it would have been large capacity, roll-on/roll-off kind of ships"

General Colin Powell
Chairman, JCS

The results of the study by the Commission on Merchant Marine and Defense and the aftermath of the Persian Gulf War pointed out the need to expand our sealift capability and set into motion an ambitious program by the Department of Defense (DOD) and the Department of Transportation (DOT). Notwithstanding this, we have had programs on the drawing board in the past without any appreciable results. Problems of the past seems to have stemmed from the lack of management and direction from those responsible for sealift programs. One could

postulate many reasons why this was so; low priority, lack of Congressional support, a lack of understanding of the problem, and several others. I would argue that it was a combination of them all. The Navy has included, for several years now, the mission of strategic sealift to its other primary missions of control of the seas and power projection. Recently the Sea Service issued a white paper delineating its commitment to a robust sealift force. All these enduring concepts look great on paper but the true test will come when keels are laid for new vessels or ship conversions started.

The full weight of the nation's ineptitude in this area can not be place on the Navy. Congress, past White House administrations, and yes, even the Army share some of the blame. The Army, because in protecting its own programs, did not speak up loud enough when sealift acquisitions were not progressing as they should.

In the past several years, Congress has provided appropriations for these programs, yet no significant obligations were made to acquire additional sealift assets. Recent initiatives by the Congress, the DOD and the DOT, if followed through, will correct this serious drawback. However, four fundamental questions come immediately to mind that must be addressed if we are to solve the nation's strategic lift ills: (1) Can we overcome the bureaucracy of multiple agencies, as well as the Congress, to manage this vital program? (2) Is funding for these programs adequate? (3) Are the programs balanced to provide

the flexibility needed for a global response? and (4) Will program results meet contingency force requirements? A closer examination of recent decisions by the Joint Staff, US Transportation Command, Military Sealift Command, Maritime Administration and the Army and Navy staffs and Congressional actions may reveal the answer to these important questions.

As previously mentioned, the first serious attempt in recent years to correct the sealift shortfall came in 1989 after the findings of the President's Commission on Merchant Marine and Defense were released. In these initial attempts, there was little agreement on requirements, defense needs or funding required to address those needs. Additionally, inter-departmental bickering over responsibilities, and particularly funding responsibility, led to one failure after another in getting a viable program off the ground.

The House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee proposed adding \$1 billion to the Navy's shipbuilding and conversion (SCN) budget for a fast sealift program in FY 90. Funding for that proposal was reduced in conference to \$600 million. Under a separate proposal, \$15 million was appropriated for fast sealift research and development. Because DOD was not obligating funds and the Graham-Rudman-Hollins Deficit Reduction Act came into play, a pro-rated reduction in outlays reduced the program amount to \$592 million.

The next event affecting sealift funding was the Panama Economic Aid Bill which DOD and the Congress funded, along with

other FY 90 line items, by reprogramming the \$15 million appropriated for fast sealift research and development.

In its FY 91 defense budget plan, the administration proposed shifting a total of \$2.19 billion from other defense programs to fund M-1 tanks. This included the \$592 million for sealift appropriated in the FY 90 budget. This led to a confrontation between the Congress and the Executive Branch that further delayed the obligation of funds on sealift programs.

In September 1990, Representative Walter B. Jones, chairman of the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee, solicited the views of government and industry leaders on "the U.S. capability to meet sealift requirements for the Persian Gulf."¹⁰ One of the experts called by Jones, John J. Stocker, president of the Shipbuilders Council of America, suggested that "DOD and Congress might strike a much better balance in the Pentagon's strategic lift budget. He observed that, although 95 percent of all U.S. military cargo must go by sea, the Defense Department spends only 5 percent of its strategic lift budget on sealift. Conversely, 95 percent of the budget goes for airlift, which carries only 5 percent of the cargo."¹¹

The end result was that there was no consensus on acquisition strategy for sealift and no foreseeable impetus to build or otherwise acquire additional sealift. Consequently, it took an event such as the invasion of Kuwait for the Congress and the Department of Defense get to the point where we are now about to improve significantly our sealift capability.

Following the successful conclusion of the Persian Gulf War, the United States was faced with adapting to a rapidly changing global security environment. The new regionally oriented focus requires the ability to respond quickly and effectively to unpredictable challenges to U.S. interest. To meet these challenges, future U.S. forces must have the capability to deploy to an area of potential crisis in sufficient time with the right mix of combat and support forces. As pointed out in the Army's Strategic Mobility Plan, the military is fully capable now of delivering an airborne or light infantry brigade anywhere by C+4 and only marginally capable of delivering the remainder of its divisions by C+12.¹²

Recognizing this need, Congress, in the FY 91 National Defense Authorization Act, directed the Department of Defense to determine future mobility requirements for the Armed Forces. This tasking led to the Mobility Requirements Study (MRS), completed in January 1992, which set out to define future mobility requirements in light of a revised National Security Strategy, force reductions, potential security threats, and the lessons learned from the Persian Gulf War. The study recommends development of an integrated mobility plan that will give the military a strategically effective deployment capability within today's austere fiscal climate.

The study effort began with analysis of logistical and war fighting aspects of potential regional crises set in 1999 using the following scenarios:

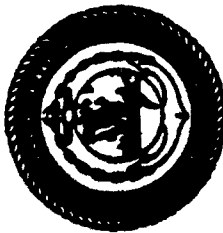
- Regional contingency in the Middle East or Persian Gulf.
- Regional contingency on the Korean Peninsula.
- Regional contingency in Europe.
- Regional contingency in Southeast Asia.
- Regional contingency in the Western Hemisphere.
- Two concurrent regional contingencies beginning sequentially.¹³

The degree of risk one is willing to accept in each phase of a contingency operation is a key factor in determining mobility force requirements. The requirement is based on reducing both early risk (risk that a potential aggressor can attack early enough and with sufficient strength to overrun key objectives in the territory of a US ally before sufficient US and coalition forces arrive. The "early risk" period of a crisis is approximately 2 weeks or less)¹⁴, and late risk (risk that, before the United States and its coalition partners can deploy decisive force and successfully counterattack, an aggressor may have caused unacceptable attrition to US forces, politically fractured the coalition, or ravaged occupied territory. The "late risk" period in most major contingency scenarios runs to about the 8th week)¹⁵ to moderate levels and deploying adequate support to combat units. Analysis of the various scenarios and risk associated with each in combination with the experience of Operation Desert Shield provided the basis for determining total mobility requirements, which included prepositioning, airlift and sealift.

Mobility requirements are based on the Army plan to provide a sustainable strategic corps of five divisions that it can tailor to meet specific crises anywhere in the world. Based in CONUS, the force must be highly mobile and supportable; the lead brigade will be deployed by air and combat ready on the ground 4 days after the start of deployment (C+4); the lead division, by C+12; two heavy divisions (armored, mechanized, or air assault as determined by the CINC) will arrive by fast sealift by C+30; and the full five-division contingency force with its support command (COSCOM) will be available at C+75.¹⁶ Additionally, the Army will preposition ships with the equipment for a heavy combat brigade and sufficient support to sustain the corps until sea lines of communications are established.¹⁷

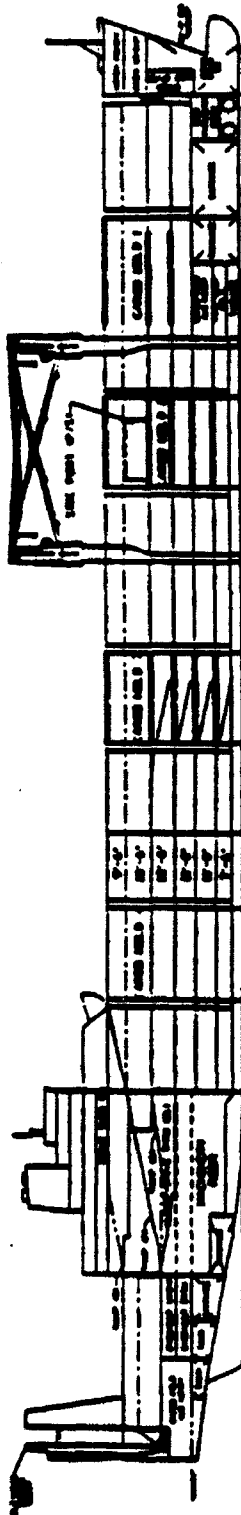
To meet the requirements of the most demanding scenario, a regional contingency in the Middle East or Persian Gulf, in terms of strategic lift, the study recommends a plan that increases sealift and adds to airlift capacity. The major components of the plan are:

- To acquire--through new construction and conversion--additional sealift capacity equal to 20 large (380,000 square foot total capacity and 300,000 square foot capacity for prepositioning configuration), medium-speed (24-knot sustained) roll-on/roll-off (LMSR) ships and to lease two container ships (2000 container capacity each) for prepositioning of sustainment supplies. See Figure 1, which depicts a notional design of a Large, Medium Speed, Roll-on/Roll-off Ship (LMSR).



**NOTIONAL NEW CONSTRUCTION
24 KNOT CONVENTIONAL SEALIFT
PREPOSITIONING/SURGE (CSP/S-24)**

N42



NOTIONAL NEW CONSTRUCTION
24 KNOT CONVENTIONAL SEALIFT
PREPOSITIONING/SURGE (CSP/S-24)

CHARACTERISTICS

LENGTH, OVERALL:	950 FT	PROPULSION: MULTIPLE SCREW NON-STEAM	2 - 25 LONG TON (AT 75' OFF CENTERLINE) SINGLE PEDestal TWIN CHIMES
BEAM:	105.5 FT	SPEED: 24 KTS	2 - SIDEPORTS (ONE PORT, ONE STARBOARD)
DRAFT, DESIGN:	35 FT	RANGE: 12,000 NM	1 - SIDE PORT RAMP
DISPLACEMENT, FULL LOAD:	64,000 LT	HELICOPTER LANDING CAPABILITY	1 - SLEWING STEER RAMP
50 SUPER CARGO			NO/NO DECK AREA AND CARGO WEIGHT:
5 SPARES			ESTIMATED TOTAL NET DECK AREA: 380,000 FT ²
40 CREW			ESTIMATED TOTAL NET ENCLOSED DECK AREA: 310,000 FT ²
95 ACCOMMODATIONS			ESTIMATED NOMINAL SURGE CARGO WEIGHT: 10,500 LT

Figure 1.

- To deploy by fiscal year 1997 an afloat prepositioning package of approximately 2 million square feet of Army combat and combat support equipment on nine of the LMSRs.

- To add 3 million square feet of surge sealift capacity by fiscal year 1998 for the rapid deployment of heavy Army divisions and support from the United States. This capability will be provided by 11 of the LMSRs.

- To expand by fiscal year 1999 the Ready Reserve Force (RRF), maintained by the Maritime Administration for the Department of Defense, from the current 96 ships to 142 ships and to increase the readiness of the fleet. The expansion and continuing modernization of the reserve force will be through acquisition of used ships, or alternatively, charter, build-and-charter and national defense features in new commercial ships or combination thereof.

- To improve specific components of the transportation system within the United States to move combat and support units from their peacetime locations to airports and seaports of embarkation by accomplishing the following: buy and stage about 233 additional heavy-lift railcars, increase the daily railcar loading capacity of key installations and improve military use of containerization; develop a West Coast containerized ammunition loading facility; negotiate additional berthing at loading ports for deploying units; improve the readiness and availability of transportation terminal units; and seek new legislation to ensure continuous and expeditious use of ports.¹⁸

On the airlift side, the integrated plan includes the following: by 1999, the U.S. should have an overall airlift capacity of fifty-seven million ton-miles per day (mtm/d). Reaching that goal from today's forty-eight mtm/d capacity would require purchase of 120 new C-17 transport aircraft--the full quantity to be procured under current USAF plans.¹⁹

As with most defense programs, cost of conversions and new acquisitions could determine the exact size and number of ships, however, an approximate delivery schedule is shown below.²⁰

	FY93	FY94	FY95	FY96	FY97	FY98	FY99	Total
Prepositioning		4		4	1			9
Fast Sealift				2	5	4		11
Container		2						2

THE NATIONAL DEFENSE SEALIFT FUND

To break the impasse of not obligating sealift dollars appropriated by Congress, the FY93 Department of Defense Authorization Act established the National Defense Sealift Fund. The fund would be the mechanism for channeling resources to meet strategic sealift requirements, including those deficiencies identified in the Mobility Requirements Study report. Under the control of the Secretary of Defense, the fund will gain resources from appropriations, contributions from Allies, receipts from disposal of DOD sealift vessels, and receipts from any build and

charter programs. Request for expenditures from the sealift fund must be in four distinct categories: construction, purchase, alteration and conversion; operations, maintenance, lease, and charter; installation and maintenance of national defense features on privately owned and operated vessels; and research and development. The act further authorized the transfer of \$1,875,100,000 from unobligated balances of appropriations made to the Navy for fiscal years 1990, 1991, and 1992 for sealift and appropriates for FY 93, \$613,200,000 into the National Defense Sealift Fund.²¹

Total acquisition cost over the POM period is estimated to be \$5-6 billion. Sufficient funds exist now to begin the program; however, additional funds must be generated in the outyears. The Navy budget POM projections are:

	FY90-92	FY93	FY94	FY95	FY96	FY97	FY98	FY99	TOTAL
POM	1875	613	306	205	310	406	580	520	4815

What does this buy from a warfighter's point of view? The mobility enhancements recommended by the Mobility Requirements Study will improve deployment capability dramatically. As pointed out in an article in Defense 92 Magazine; "In fact, the mobility improvements during this period will be able to close the force the United States sent to Operation Desert Storm in about 90 days, in contrast to the actual six-month deployment in 1990."²² Improvements in force closure of this caliber are well

worth the investment and could pay off in other ways such as lives saved and missions successfully accomplished.

Are there any negative aspects of the National Defense Sealift Fund? Most would agree that there are few. However, the concept does have one serious flaw that impacts several dimensions of the sealift issue. The NDSF and its implementation plan does not tie together all facets of a national sealift program that addresses, not only ship acquisitions, but also, manning shortfalls, the US flag carrier decline and problems facing the US shipbuilding industry. Taken in total, these problems and their solutions are monumental. In fact, many would argue, too large to be addressed under a single umbrella program. But, can they be successfully resolved if addressed individually? Because they are all interrelated, I would argue no.

Make no mistake, the NDSF does offer a good short to mid-term solution for defense needs. It does not adequately address the other concerns mentioned above, nor will it significantly cure long-term sealift ills. Until the very top leadership, the President of the United States, becomes an advocate and pulls together all the many interest groups we will continue to put together a fragmented effort.

The key to getting top leadership onboard is to have the right management structure in place with a vision and focus to direct a national sealift policy. That structure, at present, is fragmented with the Navy, Department of Transportation, and US Transportation Command all having a piece of the puzzle. A key

player, also, is the Army. What should its role be? As the Service with more to gain (and lose) from a national sealift program, the Army must posture itself to be an active player at all decision levels in both the planning and execution stages. Army leadership should insist that joint Service committees make key acquisition decisions and that U.S. TRANSCOM take a greater role in the management of the National Defense Sealift Fund.

It is obvious that all the above agencies should play a role in the equation. The challenge is to find the right formula for a management team that can make it all happen. Do we need another Presidential Commission or Congressionally mandated study? Perhaps we do. Since both the executive and legislative branches of government must reach consensus or, at the very least, a compromise, some combination of the two is in order. At the very least, it must bring together representatives of private maritime industry as well as government groups with a stake in this issue.

CONCLUSION

With the ongoing Defense downsizing and retrenchment from overseas basing, the ability to move forces and their support to a theater of operations has assumed even greater significance. While previous efforts to define and finance desired sealift capabilities have been generally unsuccessful due to the lack of a mechanism that controlled all aspects of the nations sealift assets, that situation has now changed. Before the FY93

establishment of the National Defense Sealift Fund, the Congress has appropriated money for three consecutive budget cycles, each time with conflicting direction on how to use it. The National Defense Sealift Fund is a positive measure that will ensure a viable mobility force. The primary advantage of the fund is the accumulation of all sealift financial assets in one fund that is centrally managed to ensure that funds are applied to the highest priority requirements and potentially to additional sealift capacity. The sealift fund would also provide the defense department enhanced financial flexibility permitting tradeoffs between various program activities to satisfy sealift requirements, as well as provide a mechanism to facilitate burdensharing arrangements.

The National Defense Sealift Fund and sealift acquisition program, like before, will be administered by the Navy. It is, therefore, imperative that the Department of the Army has a voice in the development of the implementation plan to ensure Army interests are best served. In their White Paper, "...From the Sea - Preparing the Naval Service for the 21st Century", the senior leaders of the Navy state: "Of particular importance, sealift is an enduring mission for the Navy....Sealift is the key to force sustainment for joint operations, and we are committed to a strong national sealift capability."²³ Notwithstanding the Navy's recently placed emphasis on its sealift mission, past history has shown that less glamorous programs, such as sealift, do not always get the attention that the Congress and the Army

believes it should. Accordingly, close coordination between Army and Navy staffs is imperative throughout the entire programming, planning, and execution of the sealift expansion program.

Management of the National Defense Sealift Fund is perhaps the most critical aspect of the proposed solution to resolve sealift shortfalls. As such, an "honest broker" must be involved in the fund management to insure national objectives remain at the top priority and that Service parochialism does not "creep in" the process. That "honest broker" should be the U.S. Transportation Command. Additionally, private industry, the Maritime Administration, the Defense Department, and the Legislative Branch must all form a consensus on the direction we take as a nation. Support of the leadership in the Departments of Defense and Transportation is essential to keep the momentum and focus direction on the right path.

It is clear, as regional scenarios become the focus of military planning, that sealift is an essential element of our defense strategy. As such we must be prepared to receive and distribute combat equipment and sustaining supplies anywhere under all conceivable conditions. Therefore we must assure that a robust, technically advanced LOTS/AFOE capability is maintained: a capability that can operate at high seastates, over long distances, and can interface with all available sealift.

We must actively explore alternative methods of providing and financing sealift assets. Programs such as build and charter or lease programs offer numerous opportunities to not only

acquire additional sealift, but also to revitalize our ship building industry and provide much needed revenues for US flag carriers. Another spinoff would be employment of a larger merchant marine workforce which is critical for the manning of the Ready Reserve Force fleet.

The programs are in place and funds are available for the short term. It will require the cooperation of the Departments of Defense and Transportation, the Congress, and private industry. We must start now or even six months' reaction or warning time may not be enough to assure victory in the next Desert Storm. Will it be accomplished before we have another Desert Shield/Storm? Will all the agencies involved come together to close the sealift gap? The answer to the first question can not be precisely predicted. With a strong and unified commitment from our military leaders, the answer to the last could be a resounding yes.

ENDNOTES

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